

9 Steps For Planning Vacation Bible School

<http://ministry-to-children.com/how-to-plan-vacation-bible-school/>

Tony Kummer - Published May 18, 2008

It's that time of year and everyone is working on planning VBS. In this article, I'll give you a simple 9 step process for organizing vacation Bible school. Then I'll share some of my best practical tips about vacation Bible school. As always, you can leave a comment and help me make this resource better.

Update: This article was first posted last year, but I wanted to bring it back out for the VBS season. Let me know what you think – leave a comment at the bottom of this page.

happy kidMake prayer a part of your planning. I didn't include praying as one of the steps below because it should be a part of every step. You'll need God's help at every point to make this year's vacation Bible school an eternal success.

1. Determine your support level

It takes more than money to put together a great Bible school week. You'll also need volunteers, donations, pastoral backing, facilities, and prayer partners. Before your launch into planning, take time to consider how much support is available. The approach you take will depend on how much backing is available. If you find low support, you might need to opt for a shortened schedule (3-days) or find another church to work with. If support level is high, you might be able to do something extra like an extended schedule (all-day or 2-weeks) or host a community wide VBS for several smaller churches to join.

2. Choose dates for your VBS

Several factors affect scheduling. In our town, we work around several major summer events like the county fair, the boat races and Relay for Life. It is also smart to check with other churches in town to see which weeks they have planned for VBS. Work together with church leaders to pick the best available week. (But there will always be someone on vacation.)

3. Choose & order curriculum for your VBS

I've written a whole article on How To Choose A Vacation Bible School Curriculum. This is an important step, because not all VBS themes will fit every church situation. Like everything, it's better to start early and get the materials in hand ASAP. Most publishers include a very helpful guide to planning Bible school at your church. If you need more help finding the right curriculum, you can read my Vacation Bible School Curriculum Reviews.

4. Create a rotation schedule and room assignment chart

There are many right ways to do this. I tend to be as simple as possible. Your plan will be determined by your support level and facility setup. We have several large meeting rooms, so I prefer large group stations for crafts, music, learning and snack. You can download an example of my rotation schedule [here](#).

5. Recruit volunteers for Vacation Bible School

The next step is to create your roster. To keep things simple, I put mine on the same document as the rotation schedule. The key to finding volunteers is relationships and helping volunteers find the right spot. Our church has many volunteers who work VBS every summer. I've written an article on this topic

too: You can read more about finding volunteers for vacation Bible school. Consider using teenage VBS workers, but only with the proper training.

6. Publicize and pre-register children for Bible school

Once all the pieces are in place (or at least you're trying), it's time to start promotion. Most churches will ask members to speak with their neighbors about coming to Bible school. I prefer a half-sheer registration flyer that also works for a promotion piece. Depending on your budget, advertising can be a major expense. We use a large sign on the road in front of our church to increase awareness. Some publishers offer online registration tools that can simplify the process.

7. Communicate the plan

Make sure all your volunteers know their roles before VBS starts. Some churches have multiple meetings to walk through the plan. For our church, I typically spare them the meeting but call everyone to make sure they are on the same page. If you do have a meeting, use it to encourage the workers and pray for God's help.

6. Adjust as needed during VBS week

Even the best plans will need adjustments during Bible school week. For this reason, I try to delegate all the teaching responsibilities so I am free to make decisions during the week. If you've communicated your plan well, then adjustments should be minimal.

7. Follow up any new contacts made during Bible school

The missing step for most churches is to follow up after VBS. I suggest a letter from the pastor for all un-churched guests and possibly home visitations. If you have children who come to Christ, make these priorities. The most effective form of follow-up is to get prospects enrolled in Sunday school. If you struggle to make that happen, I recommend you read this article by Darryl Wilson: [Grow Your Sunday School by Following Up Vacation Bible School](#). Tip: Write a follow-up letter for the children who attended VBS. You can send it home with them on the last day or mail it to them a week later. You can see my sample VBS letter to children [here](#).

8. Evaluate and make detailed notes

I keep a notebook open all week to record my observations from VBS. This has been my best teacher. During Bible school, you can see first hand things you may wish to do differently next year. So, write it down and file it away. If you're brave, ask several key leaders to keep their own list. Have lunch together the week after Bible school and compare notes. Here are some printable VBS evaluation forms.

9. Say thank you to every volunteer

I've saved this one for last, but it is very important. We try to recognize volunteers at VBS graduation, in church the following Sunday, with personal thank you notes. Go the extra mile for key leaders and phone them to say thanks. Practically, you can't do Bible school without the workers. Pray that God will bless them for all their hard work.

Need more ideas? Then here are six more ideas for how to plan VBS . . .

Practical Tips For Planning Vacation Bible School

- Begin early. Some people work best under pressure, but this is not true for team efforts such as vacation Bible school. Don't wait until the last minute! If possible, have your volunteer roster

filled several weeks early. Starting things late will cause stress and distract your focus from ministering to the children.

- Talk about it. Start talking to people as soon as you can. Be vocal about the progress of your VBS plan all through the process. This will help people share your excitement and provide redundant channels of communication. I've discovered that talking about Bible school with our church volunteers is a great way get feedback and to refine my ideas.
- Learn from last year. Even if this is your first year as VBS director, you can still get some great information by asking about what worked in the past. So, talk to volunteers from last year and see what they liked and what needs improvement.
- Have fun. Doing God's work should bring joy into your life. Don't let all the details and worries rob you of that. Besides, if the leaders aren't having fun, then the kids will suffer.
- Find ideas online. Most major VBS publishers have forums on their website for churches to share ideas about the curriculum. This can be a great source of inspiration. Here are a few that I've checked out: LifeWay, Group, Gospel Light
- Keep it simple. This was the biggest lesson I learned after my first year leading Bible school. All those bells and whistles were distracting our people from the real ministry with the children. So, whenever possible go simple. Spend your time and energy on what will make a lasting difference, like relationships, prayer and teaching.